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SUBJECT: FIJI COUNTER-COUP? BOMB THREATS? RUMORS CONTINUE

REF: SUVA 465

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

Renewed rumors of a counter-coup against Bainimarama

¶1. (C) With Commodore Bainimarama in the U.S. -- he delivered Fiji's speech to the UNGA on Sept. 28 and is not due back in Suva until Oct. 5 -- rumors are circulating that military-related elements will undertake a counter-coup to remove Bainimarama and his core-group of backers from the RFMF and return Fiji to civilian governance. Deep unhappiness within ethnic-Fijian villages about the coup has fed such rumors, which have popped up repeatedly since the coup, thus far with no actual result. Sources close to the military leadership continue to report no cracks in RFMF loyalty. Nonetheless, ethnic-Fijian unhappiness is real, and presumably a portion of the heavily ethnic-Fijian RFMF is unhappy, too. Certainly some sidelined RFMF senior leaders and/or disgruntled retirees could be working behind the scenes to gauge support and organize action.

Bomb threats for Fiji Day?

¶2. (U) On Sept. 25 as Bainimarama was departing for New York, RFMF spokesman Tikoitoga announced that Fiji would remain calm in the Commodore's absence. Tikoitoga also announced that the military council, at a session just prior to the trip, had tentatively concluded the re-invocation of public-emergency regulations (PER) that began Sept. 6 when deposed PM Qarase returned to Suva would end Oct. 5, if nobody engages in incitement. (Media report an incentive to remove the PER: that the EU is delaying hand-over of F\$9 million in sugar assistance.) On Sept. 28, Tikoitoga reported to the media a concern that military-intelligence has heard dissidents may be planning bomb attacks to destabilize the country on Fiji Day, Oct. 10. Tikoitoga said there have been persistent rumors that a bombing was being planned, and "We can not take anything lightly."

Comment

¶3. (C) The reality is that to be successful a counter-coup would have to be a closely held plot until sprung. Past pre-coup attempts failed to remove Bainimarama in January 2005 and October 2006. Some of those rumored to be plotting now are people who were involved in the past attempts. Anything is possible, but nothing is certain; and the fact that Bainimarama felt confident enough to travel abroad suggests his own comfort level with his military support remains fairly high. On the other hand, the re-imposition of the PER in September suggests Bainimarama realizes he continues to have problems in the ethnic-Fijian community.

